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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ABU DHABI 001797

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STATE FOR PM -- A/S HILLEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MCAAP](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MNUC](#) [IR](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILLEN'S VISIT
TO THE UAE

REF: A. ABU DHABI 1422
[1](#)B. ABU DHABI 316
[1](#)C. ABU DHABI 288
[1](#)D. USDAO IIR 6 931 0090 05

ABU DHABI 00001797 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: Embassy Abu Dhabi looks forward to welcoming you to the UAE on May 15-16. Your visit will be an opportunity to build on recent Iran discussions between U.S. and UAE officials, particularly Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Joseph's April 8 meeting with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed about Iran's proliferation and a new security dialogue on defensive measures. You will want to elaborate on deterrence and dissuasion measures to deter Iran from acquiring or using Weapons of Mass Destruction by creating a layered missile defense system. Also, it would be helpful to engage your hosts in a more comprehensive discussion about strategic air defense systems, to include Patriot Missile and Air Defense, Aegis cruiser, Airborne Laser, and Theater High Altitude Air Defense. We have requested meetings for you with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, and UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Hamad Mohammed Thani al-Rumaithy. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) When U/S Joseph visited Abu Dhabi, he emphasized that the United States considers Iran a serious threat to international peace and security, and that the USG will not tolerate Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon (ref A). Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) replied that the UAE also considers Iran a threat, but he noted that the UAE's close proximity to Iran put the country in a "vulnerable" position. He also stated that the UAE aims to maintain its robust trading relationship with Iran as a measure to enhance UAE security. Highlighting the UAE's dilemma, AbZ requested that the USG approach the UAE on interdiction requests "only as a last resort." U/S Joseph conveyed to AbZ that he hoped to engage in a dialogue with our key allies, including the UAE, to develop a broader strategy for countering the threat. He outlined multilateral diplomatic efforts, including targeted sanctions, which could be taken against Iran in the event Iran is unresponsive to the UNSC. In conjunction with these efforts, U/S Joseph conveyed the USG's interest in beginning a security dialogue on defensive measures with the UAE and other Gulf countries.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) U/S Joseph told AbZ that security capabilities that Gulf countries could consider to counter the Iranian threat and enhance deterrence include counter proliferation planning

to prepare for the possible use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by enhancing bilateral and multilateral training and exercises (this could include consequence management training and counter-ballistic missile exercises); denial and interdiction of proliferation efforts, such as cracking down on front companies and endorsing the Proliferation Security Initiative,s Statement of Interdiction Principles (UAE gave its private endorsement April 15); and deterrence and dissuasion to deter Iran from acquiring or using WMD by creating a layered missile defense system. AbZ listened with interest but made no commitments. (Note: AbZ will be attending the GCC-EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels during your visit. End Note.)

Missile Defense

¶4. (S/NF) In your meetings, we suggest that you have a more comprehensive discussion with your hosts about the various strategic systems, to include Patriot, Aegis, Airborne Laser, and Theater High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD). U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Gen. Abizaid and AbZ's older brother, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ), discussed the concept of a regional missile defense shield March 27. MbZ was skeptical about getting other Gulf Cooperation Council members on board in a campaign against Iran.

¶5. (S/NF) U/S Joseph also pursued the missile defense system theme in his discussion with AbZ April 8. AbZ appeared skeptical about the Patriot system's effectiveness. U/S Joseph mentioned encouraging results from recent anti-ballistic missile tests and explained that the defensive measures do not have to be 100 percent accurate; they just need to be "credible enough" to deter Iran by convincing them that the effectiveness of their offensive measures had been eroded.

ABU DHABI 00001797 002.2 OF 004

Patriots vs. Russian S-300/S-400s

¶6. (S/NF) As a point of fact, Raytheon Company, Patriot Air and Missile Defense System's manufacturer, has been trying for 10 years to get the UAE to purchase the Patriot without getting any traction. According to a Raytheon source, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the UAEG loaned more than \$1 billion to Russia to help with debt relief. Russia is reportedly developing and attempting to field the S-300 air defense system and its follow-on S-400 system to satisfy the debt. This could explain why the UAE has been reluctant to purchase another air defense system, such as the Patriot. Moreover, the Emiratis are aware of U.S. interest in placing our own Patriots on their soil to protect U.S. deployed military troops and assets. Our reasons for urging the Emiratis to consider acquiring Patriots are that they would allow better interoperability (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have purchased Patriots), which a Russian air defense system would not. But, also, U.S. strategic Patriot systems may be employed to other hot spots around the world and not available for emirate protection.

Protection of U.S. Assets: Patriot Emplacement Survey

¶7. (S/NF) At CENTCOM's direction, and with Directorate for Military Intelligence permission, U.S. Army missile defense experts traveled to the UAE to conduct an air defense assessment. Previous Patriot emplacement locations in the UAE were focused against the Iraqi threat. The new surveys, completed April 19, identified six new Patriot Advanced Capability-3 emplacement locations to deter the Iranian missile threat. They would protect U.S. military interests at Al Dhafra Air Base, Al Bateen Air Base, Minhad Air Base, Fujairah Airport, Jebel Ali Port, and Fujairah Port, and much of the surrounding metropolitan areas of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Aegis Cruiser

¶8. (S/NF) U/S Joseph and AbZ also discussed the capability of the Aegis cruiser-based missile interceptor and the Patriot missile systems. AbZ seemed interested in the possibility of deterring Iran with regionally-deployed Aegis combatants, although he appeared concerned that an Aegis capability might not be enough given the short distance between Iran and the UAE. The UAE does not have Aegis ships, nor have they expressed any interest in acquiring them (although the UAE Navy may be very interested in learning more about their capabilities). U/S Joseph and AbZ did not discuss THAAD or Airborne Laser.

UAE Within Striking Distance

¶9. (S/NF) Iran conducted its "Noble Prophet" military exercise in March/April 2006, the largest Iranian exercise to date, involving surface ships, aircraft, submarines, and UAVs. During the highly publicized exercise, the Iranians demonstrated new weapons systems and techniques, apparently to demonstrate to the U.S. and the Iranian public, as well as their regional neighbors, their military capability and proficiency. Last year, Iran reportedly test fired rockets from Sirri Island, and rocket equipment was being deployed to the disputed, Iranian-held islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs, as well as Sirri. The rockets are capable of reaching most UAE cities (ref D).

UAE Boosts Surveillance of Iranians, Extremists

¶10. (S/NF) We know that the Emiratis are ramping up their own surveillance activities, especially targeting Iran and Islamic extremists. Their Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) had between 50 and 60 personnel conducting "electronic surveillance" four years ago, a number that has soared to more than 900 personnel today, with additional personnel and co-location of other units capabilities. Many of the surveillance functions from other agencies in the different emirates were aggregated under DMI.

Critical Infrastructure Protection

¶11. (S/NF) The UAE has somewhat belatedly begun to recognize the vulnerability of their offshore oil infrastructure. MbZ

ABU DHABI 00001797 003.2 OF 004

told Frances Fragos Townsend, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, on 22 April that the UAE was "absolutely" worried about its oil infrastructure. He told Townsend that there are three international companies currently conducting risk assessments of the UAE oil infrastructure and maritime security for the UAEG. The UAE Navy for the first time ever included a maritime oil platform (OPLAT) defense scenario in an exercise with the US Fifth Fleet in February 2006. The Fifth Fleet is also working with the UAE Navy now to establish an OPLAT defense Standard Operating Procedure, and has offered to take UAE Navy representatives to Iraqi OPLATs to see how the coalition handles command and control for OPLAT defense.

Robust Political-Military Relationship

¶12. (C) Iran-related security concerns are but a facet of the U.S.-UAE bilateral political-military relationship. The UAE has continued its excellent support in the war on terror and it has cooperated with us in Afghanistan and in Iraq. This cooperation is described in detail in the 2005/2006 Report to Congress on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense (ref

C). The UAE provides basing and overflight for U.S. reconnaissance and refueling assets, as well as naval logistics support. The F-16 Block 60 program is a showcase of cooperation between our nations. The UAE has taken delivery of 59 F-16 aircraft (one was lost in a mishap on January 9, 2006). There are U.S. pilots and training professionals here that are core instructors for the program.

Another example of our expanding military cooperation is the Air Warfare Center at Al Dhafra Air Base. Modeled on the U.S. Air Force Air Warfare Center at Nellis AFB, NV, and the NATO Tactical Leadership Program at Florennes, Belgium, this regional facility is intended to enhance military interoperability and cooperation between the U.S. and members of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, and UK and France. In the future, the U.S. plans to help the UAE develop a state-of-the-art tactical range, incorporate USN and USMC assets as participants, and use tankers (USAF and others) for air-to-air refueling.

Weapons Acquisition

¶13. (S) The UAE has historically obtained its military hardware from assorted partners, including the U.S., France, the U.K., Russia, and China. We would prefer that they mostly buy from us for interoperability reasons, and we believe they, too, prefer to buy American quality. However, it is not always clear to us that there is a strategic vision behind their acquisitions. A case in point is the weaponry situation within the UAE naval forces, which appears disorganized. It would be useful to know more about their naval capabilities, particularly in light of the Iranian threat; therefore we recommend that you ask your military interlocutor about this.

¶14. (S) Following are some of the most prominent cases the United States Liaison Office is managing:

-- Four-year remanufacture of 30 Apache AH-64A attack helicopters to a AH-64D "Longbow" configuration; \$745 million Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case; the first six aircraft have been shipped to Mesa, Arizona for refurbishment by Boeing. (Note: UAE Apaches were deployed to Kosovo in 1999 under the Joint Command, and later deployed to Kuwait during the Gulf War. End Note.)

-- Impending purchase of 20 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and 780 complementing Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) rounds; \$800 million FMS case; meeting in Washington May 1-4 to discuss the scope of the sale with UAE Land Forces Artillery Commander.

-- Stalled purchase of 1,000 Javelin anti-armor missiles; \$125 million FMS case; UAE did not sign the Letter of Acceptance by the April 2006 deadline; Oman and Bahrain, which were expecting economy of scale savings from the UAE order, will face higher costs for Javelin, and the Javelin production line will shut down in May. (Comment: The Javelins are not as critical to the UAE arsenal as HIMARS or the Apache remanufacture, which may help explain their decision not to sign. End Comment.)

DCA: UAE Seeking Renegotiation

ABU DHABI 00001797 004.2 OF 004

¶15. (C) Despite their generally excellent cooperation and the UAE's accommodation of our military presence on their soil, we foresee a requirement for discussions on the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). One likely venue for those discussions is the next U.S.-UAE Joint Military Commission (JMC). The U.S. has proposed that the JMC be held in Washington, June 21-22, but the UAE Armed Forces General Headquarters has yet to respond. Meanwhile, we are still waiting for the UAE to follow up on a February 14 diplomatic

note in which they advised us that they were interested in negotiating changes to the DCA. The issue of legal jurisdiction remains the sticking point (ref B). The language of the existing DCA, which was never ratified by the rulers of the seven emirates, provides that the U.S. retains jurisdiction over all U.S. military and DOD civilian personnel and their dependents whenever present in the UAE in connection with their official duties. The UAE has repeatedly insisted that they will assume criminal and civil jurisdiction of U.S. DOD personnel. Periodic incidents involving U.S. military personnel since the DCA was signed in 1994 have been resolved through ad hoc arrangements, but with more ship visits than anywhere outside the U.S., and Dubai the most popular R&R port for NAVCENT personnel, we are concerned that these arrangements may not suffice if there is a serious accident or crime involving or affecting UAE citizens.

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